1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

621 occupy it, and small camps are sometimes named after an old person of importance who has erected his windscreen there. We have seen that the social composition of a camp varies at different times of the drought from the people of a hamlet to the people of a village, or of neighbouring villages, and that men sometimes camp with kinsmen living in camps other than those of their own villages. Consequently, while local communities of the rains tend to be also local communities in the drought their composition may be somewhat different. We again emphasize that not only are the people of a camp living in a more compact group than the people of a village, but also that in camp life there is more frequent contact between its members and greater co-ordination of their activities. The cattle are herded together, milked at the same time, and so on. In a village each household herds its own cattle, if they are herded at all, and performs its domestic and kraal tasks independently and at different times. In the drought there is increasing concentration and greater uniformity in response to the greater severity of the season.

[592]

634 619 We sometimes speak of a district to describe an aggregate of villages or camps which have easy and frequent intercommunication. The people of these villages take part in the same dances, intermarry, conduct feuds, go on joint raiding parties, share dry season camps or make camps in the same locality, and so on. This indefinite aggregate of contacts does not constitute a Nuer category or a political group, because the people do not see themselves, nor are seen by others, as a unique community, but 'district' is a term we employ to denote the sphere of a man's social contacts or of the social contacts of the people of a village and is, therefore, relative to the person or community spoken about. A district in this sense tends to correspond to a tertiary or a secondary tribal segment, according to the size of the tribe. In the smallest tribes a whole tribe is a man's district, and a district may even cut across tribal boundaries in that in a large tribe a border village may have more contacts with neighbouring villages of another tribe than with distant villages of its own tribe. The sphere of a man's social contacts may thus not entirely coincide with any structural division.

A number of adjacent villages, varying in number and total

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

extension according to the size of the tribe, are grouped into small tribal sections and these into larger ones. In the larger tribes it is convenient to distinguish between primary, secondary, and tertiary tribal sections. These sections, of whatever size, are, like a village, spoken of as *'cieng'*. Since the next chapter is devoted to these tribal segments no more is said about them here.

VI

The main Nuer tribes are shown on p. 8. The name 'Jagei' inserted to the west of the Nile includes a number of small tribes—Lang, Bor, Rengyan, and Wot. There are also some small tribes—if they are rightly regarded as tribes, for little research was done in the area—in the vicinity of the Dok Nuer: Beegh, Jaalogh, (Gaan)Kwac, and Rol. A crude census, compiled from various Government sources, gives, in round figures, the more recent estimates for the larger tribes as follows:

Sobat Nuer: Gaajak, 42,000; Gaagwang, 7,000; Gaajok, 42,000; Lou, 33,000. Zeraf Nuer: Lak, 24,000; Thiang, 9,000; Gaawar, 20,000. Western Nuer: Bul, 17,000; Leek, 11,000; the three Western Jikany tribes, 11,000; the various Jagei tribes, 10,000; Dok, 12,000; Nuong, 9,000. These figures are probably more accurate for the Eastern than for the Western Nuer. Estimates show wide discrepancies and there has been much guesswork. On the basis of those recorded, the Sobat Nuer are 91,000, the Zeraf Nuer 53,000, and the Western Nuer 70,000, making a total of 214,000 for the whole of Nuerland. The population of only a few tribal segments is known. Among the Lou the Gun primary section number about 22,000 and the Mor primary section about 12,000; among the Gaawar the Radh primary section number about 10,000 and the Bar primary section about 10,000; and among the Lak tribe the Kwacbur primary section number about 12,000 and the Jenyang primary section number about 12,000.

It will be remarked that the tribes of Western Nuerland are generally smaller than those on the Zeraf, and those on the Zeraf smaller than those on the Sobat. Tribes tend to be larger the farther eastwards one proceeds. Their territories also tend to be more extensive. It may be suggested that the larger population of the Eastern Nuer tribes is due to the integrating effects of conquest and settlement and to the absorption of large numbers of Dinka which resulted therefrom, but we do not think that such explanations

10:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931-1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

which gives them political unity and distinction is one of opposition. Between tribes, or federations of tribes, and foreign peoples this opposition is expressed, on the Nuer side at any rate, by contempt and persistent raiding, often carried out in a reckless and brutal manner. Between Nuer tribes, opposition is expressed by actual warfare or by acceptance that a dispute cannot, and ought not, to be settled in any other way. In intertribal warfare, however, women and children are neither speared nor enslaved. Between segments of the same tribe, opposition is expressed by the institution of the feud. A fight between persons of the same village or camp is as far as possible restricted to duelling with clubs. The hostility and mode of expression in these different relations varies in degree and in the form it takes.

Feuds frequently break out between sections of the same tribe and they are often of long duration. They are more difficult to settle the larger the sections involved. Within a village feuds are easily settled and within a tertiary tribal section they are concluded sooner or later, but when still larger groups are involved they may never be settled, especially if many persons on either side have been killed in a big fight.

A tribal section has most of the attributes of a tribe: name, sense of patriotism, a dominant lineage, territorial distinction, economic resources, and so forth. Each is a tribe in miniature, and they differ from tribes only in size, in degree of integration, and in that they unite for war and acknowledge a common principle of justice.

The strength of the sentiment associated with local groups is roughly relative to their size. Feeling of unity in a tribe is weaker than feeling of unity within its sections. The smaller the local group, the more the contacts its members have with one another and the more these contacts are co-operative and necessary for the maintenance of the life of the group. In a big group, like the tribe, contacts are infrequent, short, and of limited type. Also the smaller the group the closer and the more varied the relationships between its members, residential relations being only one strand in a network of agnatic, cognatic, and affinal relationships. Relationships by blood and marriage become fewer and more distant the wider the group.

It is evident that when we speak of a Nuer tribe we are using a relative term, for it is not always easy to say, on the criteria we have used, whether we are dealing with a tribe with two primary

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

SOCIAL UNITS

592 1. A single living hut occupied by a wife, her children and, at times, her husband if the family is a polygynous one.

2. The homestead *(gol)* consisting of a byre and huts, and containing a simple family group or polygynous family, sometimes with other relatives attached.

621 3. The hamlet *(dhor)* consisting of a cluster of homesteads surrounded by their pastures and cultivations. Each hamlet has its own name and is generally inhabited by close agnatic kinsmen, often brothers and their families.

621 361 4. The village, a very distinct unit, usually referred to as *cieng* (home). The population may be anything from fifty to several hundred. If the village is built on a ridge, homesteads and hamlets may be strung out for a considerable distance. Villages are usually distinct from each other, there being several miles of bush, swamp and grass between them. Well-marked paths, made by the constant visits exchanged by the inhabitants, join the villages to each other.

621 A village consists of a community linked by common residence and by a network of kinship and affinal ties. The inhabitants co-operate in many activities - social, economic and military - and form dry-season camps together. The village is the political unit of Nuerland and is the smallest group which is not specifically of a kinship order.(1) People of one village have a strong feeling of solidarity vis à vis people of other villages.

621 361 5. The cattle camp *(wec)*; early cattle camps may be found wherever there are depressions, pools, and patches of fresh pasture. The location of the larger camps is largely predetermined, as only a few places provide adequate pasture and water at the height of the dry season. The size of the camp depends on these resources and, whereas early camps consist only of a few households, later camps vary from 100 to 1,000 souls. Such concentrations comprise larger or smaller tribal sections and each group has its own separate section of the camping ground. Neighbouring villages participate in a cattle camp, and relatives from distant villages may join their kinsmen. There is more co-operation within a camp than within a village, as the cattle are herded together and milked at the same time, whereas in a village each homestead, in the main, herds its own cattle. A large camp is called after the dominant lineage in it or after the main village community occupying it.

634 6. The district, "an aggregate of villages and camps which have easy intercommunication".(2) It corresponds to a small tribal segment, although it may include a whole tribe or more in the case of very small

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.115.
(2) *Ibid.*, p.116.

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

tribes. The people in a district intermarry, conduct feuds, go raiding together, and so forth. 634

Nowhere in Nuerland do environmental conditions permit complete autonomy and exclusiveness of small village units. Pastoral pursuits and the needs determining transhumance cause concentrations of people and co-operation for half the year in dry-season camps, thus creating a wide inter-dependence which is lacking among the Anuak and many other tribal groups. 621

TRIBAL CHARACTERISTICS

Each tribe has a name, occupies a particular territory and owns and defends its own building sites, pastures and water supplies. Large rivers, or wide stretches of uninhabited country, generally divide adjacent sections of contiguous tribes, and these sections tend to move in different directions in the drought. Members of the same tribe have feelings of cohesion and fellowship with each other which do not extend to members of other tribes.(1) The age sets are organised tribally. 619

The tribe is the largest group of which the members habitually combine for raiding and for defensive measures. During the period of military unity, there is a truce to internal disputes. Inter-tribal fighting is fierce but is subject to certain conventions concerning women and children which do not extend to fighting between Nuer and Dinka or other neighbours. 617 721

Within a tribe compensation *(cut)* is paid for homicide. This is the invariable definition of tribal allegiance in every part of Nuerland.(2) Between tribesmen there is also *ruok* - compensation for torts other than homicide. If a man kills or injures a man of another tribe no breach of law is recognised; no obligation is felt to settle the dispute and there is no machinery to do so. 619 682 683

A tribe is a segmented structure in that it consists of a number of small divisions, each occupying a particular part of the tribal territory. There is opposition between these segments as well as a certain co-operation and cohesion. 619

Within each tribe there is a dominant clan and there is a close relationship between the lineage structure of this clan and the various territorial segments of the tribe. This is of the greatest importance for understanding Nuer structure and organisation.

Nuer tribes have no common organisation or central administration making for political unity in the generally accepted sense of the word. Yet adjacent tribes do form a political system and, in spite of inter-tribal opposition, will display a united opposition to different neighbouring groups.

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.121.
(2) *Ibid.*